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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 02/21/08

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(1) Assistant Secretary of State Hill meets senior Foreign Ministry official; Asian and Oceanic Affairs Bureau Director Saiki: "We still have a long ways to go on the North Korea issue"

SANKEI ON LINE (Full)
11:44, February 21, 2008

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Hill, who is visiting Japan, this morning met at the Foreign Ministry with Asian and Oceanic Affairs Bureau Director Akitaka Saiki, who is Japan's chief delegate to the Six-Party Talks on the North Korea nuclear issue. The two discussed the issue of North Korea, which has not yet carried out its commitment to fully implement by the end of last year a complete report of its nuclear programs. They agreed to even more closely cooperate with other concerned countries to come up with a breakthrough in the situation. This was the first time for the two chief delegates to discuss since Saiki's appointment.

In the meeting, Hill briefed Saiki on the contents of his conversation with North Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-Gwan. Afterwards Hill told the press corps, "There are things that North Korea does not want to include in its report." Saiki replied, "I have the impression that we have a long ways to go." Hill also gave his outlook that as long as North Korea does not present "a complete and correct list," Six-Party Talks cannot be restarted.

Prior to the meeting, Hill spoke with North American Bureau Director General Shinichi Nishimiya. He reiterated his regrets regarding the series of unfortunate incidents involving U.S. Marines. "I am worried about the feelings and sensitivities of the people of Okinawa Prefecture," he said.

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(2) Philippine woman who was raped is still hospitalized, as anger and distrust amplifies in Okinawa

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Internet edition) (Almost full)
12:47, February 21, 2008

In the case of a suspected rape of Philippine woman by a U.S. Army soldier, who is now under U.S. military custody, Okinawa Police Department Chief Hachiro Tokutsu today revealed in a reply to the prefectural assembly that the incident occurred on the 18th in a hotel in Okinawa City, and that the woman has been hospitalized for injuries sustained.

The police have already questioned the suspected U.S. Army soldier and relevant parties on a voluntary basis. They plan shortly to seek arrest papers charging the suspect with rape. "We have been carrying out the investigation with the full cooperation of the U.S. forces," Chief Tokutsu said.

Governor Hirokazu Nakaima states at the prefectural assembly: "We should try the case strictly under Japanese legal procedures. To repatriate the individual to America once the crime has been atoned for would go along with the feelings of the prefectural residents."

With the occurrence of still another incident, the anger and distrust toward the U.S. military within the Okinawa Prefecture has grown even stronger.

(3) DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama says party considering filing a censure motion against Defense Minister Ishiba

YOMIURI ONLINE (Full)
12:40, February 21, 2008

Commenting on the issue of Defense Minister Ishiba's accountability in connection with the collision accident of a Maritime Self-Defense Force Aegis ship, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama this morning told the press corps in Tokyo: "In the event he continues to take the attitude that he won't resign, we are full able to use the power of the Upper House where we have the numbers." He indicated he was considering having the party file a

censure motion in the Upper House where the ruling parties command a majority of seats.

Hatoyama pointed out: "The Defense Ministry has not changed its cover-up nature (such as its changing its explanation of the accident back and forth). It is necessary for the government to feel responsible." In addition, in a meeting of the party's foreign and defense departments this morning, the members agree to call for the defense minister's resignation. In the meeting, shadow foreign minister in the Next Cabinet Yoshio Hachimoto stressed, "The defense minister's resignation is essential. I would like to severely pursue his responsibility."

The Social Democratic Party in a meeting of its permanent secretaries this morning affirmed a policy course of demanding the

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resignation of the defense minister.

(4) Mayor: Remove U.S. Marines, stop Futenma base operation

AKAHATA (Page 2) (Full)
February 21, 2008

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Mayor Yoichi Iha from the Okinawa prefectural city of Ginowan, which is saddled with the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, yesterday visited the Japanese Communist Party's waiting room in the Diet to meet with JCP Chairman Kazuo Shii. In the meeting, Iha took up the recent occurrence in Okinawa Prefecture of incidents involving U.S. military personnel, such as a recent schoolgirl rape. In this regard, Iha asked Shii to cooperate on local efforts to have the U.S. Marine Corps pull its troops out of Okinawa and stop its use of the dangerous Futenma airfield.

Iha pointed out that his city of Ginowan neighbors the town of Chatan, where the recent rape of a junior high school girl took place. Iha also indicated that U.S. servicemen still cause nearly 100 crimes a year in Okinawa. "That's because there are Marines in Okinawa," Iha said.

"It's impossible to imagine the anger of people in Okinawa Prefecture at the incident this time," Shii said. In addition, Shii also underscored the fact that there is no end to the occurrence of similar heinous incidents even after U.S. Marines' gang rape of a local schoolgirl in 1995, although the Japanese government has called for the U.S. government to enforce stricter discipline and take preventive steps. "We must remove the Marines and the bases," Shii said, "or we can't resolve this kind of problem."

Iha also described that U.S. military aircraft training over residential areas near Futenma airfield has been intensifying from year to year.

In his explanation, Iha pointed to a regulation in the United States that allows no building outside domestic military bases because it is dangerous. In this connection, Iha noted that in Ginowan, there is even an elementary school located in such a danger zone in Ginowan. Nevertheless, the Futenma base is not seen as a problem in its masterplan obtained by the city's municipal government, Iha said. He insisted that the U.S. military, based on that U.S. regulation, should stop using the base.

"Taking up this problem alone," Iha responded, "the Futenma base should be closed down."

Finally, Shii said: "We understand your request. We would like to make efforts in cooperation to remove the Marines and U.S. military bases." So saying, Shii shook hands with Iha.

In the meeting, Akira Koike, chair of the JCP Policy Board, and Seiken Akamine, a JCP House of Representatives member, were also present.

(5) SOFA again steps into spotlight following Okinawa rape incident;

"We don't want dangerous neighbors"; U.S. service members living off base uncontrolled (Part A)

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Pages 24 and 25) (Abridged slightly)
February 21, 2008

By Katsumi Sekiguchi, Nobuyuki Suzuki

In the wake of the alleged rape (on Feb. 10) of a junior high school girl by a U.S. Marine, the anger of the Okinawa public is about to boil over. The slogan "Protect the children" has spread across

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Okinawa Prefecture. An emergency women's meeting was held on the night of Feb. 19 in Chatan Town, where the incident occurred, in which many called for the removal of U.S. bases. Although the government is desperately trying to calm down the storm, while rejecting calls for a revision of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), the question of U.S. military personnel living off base now has also cropped up. Governor Hirokazu Nakaima indicated yesterday that he was considering visiting the United States to call for a fundamental revision of the SOFA.

On the evening of February 19, some 320 women, mostly from within the prefecture, assembled in a hall in Chatan Town to protest the latest rape incident. With a banner reading "We don't want dangerous neighbors!" in the background, the women in the hall all angrily shouted at the top of their lungs: "What kind of country is this? This is not a lawless country. Why do children have to be assaulted time and again by U.S. soldiers who are supposed to protect the peace of Japan and the world?"

The meeting against the alleged rape that occurred in this quiet town lasted two and a half hours.

The incident occurred on the night of February 10. Tyrone Hadnott, 38, a staff sergeant attached to Camp Courtney, offered a ride home to a 14-year-old junior high school girl in Okinawa City, but he instead took her to his home in Kitanakagusukuson. Hadnott allegedly took her to his home instead and then tried to rape her. The girl started crying so he then took her to his car, saying he would drive her home. He then allegedly raped her in the car parked on a street near a park in Chatan.

The girl was found by Okinawa police officers near the scene, and Hadnott was arrested on suspicion of raping her. The U.S. Marine, however, has denied the rape charge, though he admitted to forcibly touching her body.

Okinawa hosts 70 PERCENT of U.S. military facilities in Japan. In 1995, an elementary schoolgirl was raped by three Marines. This enraged residents of Okinawa. The governments of Japan and the United States as a result improved the operation of the SOFA. Japan has repeatedly called for tighter discipline and preventive measures, but crimes continued to occur.

Yoko Higa, chairperson of the Okinawa women's groups liaison council, and others criticized the Japanese government, as well as the United States, saying: "We thought that peace had finally returned to Okinawa, but the presence of the U.S. military has stolen the peace from our hearts. Under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, Japan has been providing a sympathy budget to an unwelcome U.S. military, whose troops have committed crime after crime." Many also voiced the view that in order to prevent a recurrence of crimes, there is no other option but to remove the U.S. military from Okinawa.

According to Okinawa police statistics, 14 rape incidents, including attempted rapes, have been committed by U.S. military service members since 1995 and 17 members have been arrested.

A 28-year-old Naha City housewife with a two-year-old daughter in her arms said: "In many cases, sexually assaulted women do not come forward. The figure 14 is the tip of the iceberg. The presence of U.S. bases in Okinawa, including the noise from them, is an obstacle

to raising children. I want to see them leave Okinawa soon."

The women's anger was also directed at media reports that blamed the girl for following the perpetrator. Many women indicated that such an irrelevant argument would encourage violence, saying: "Can't children of that age go out and play? Human rights must not be violated regardless of time and place. The girl is blameless."

A 37-year-old housewife from Okinawa City took this view: "Young women tend to adore U.S. soldiers. The U.S. service member who took advantage of the girl's pure feeling is entirely to blame. This is not an emotionally-charged argument but a fact."

(6) SOFA again steps into spotlight following Okinawa rape incident; "We don't want dangerous neighbors"; U.S. service members living off base uncontrolled (Part B)

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Pages 24 and 25) (Abridged slightly)
February 21, 2008

In the meeting, questions were raised about the presence of U.S. service members living off base. The view is prevalent that it was easy for Hadnott, who is also living off base, to take the girl to his home. A sexual assault took place at an off-base home in January 2007.

According to the Okinawa prefectural government, the registered off-base U.S. military housing units number 6,098 and of them 5,107 units are under contract. The occupants are not registered as residents, and the prefectural government does not know the exact number of U.S. service members living off base. In an attempt to wipe out local people's "allergic reaction" to the U.S. bases, the U.S. military is reportedly making tremendous efforts to present itself as their good neighbor and increasing the number of service member living off base.

Suzuyo Takasato, co-representative of the Okinawa Women Act against Military Violence, and others said: "U.S. soldiers are flowing out of the bases. Allowing U.S. service members to live off base is tantamount to creating another base outside the base." The group has adopted a resolution urging Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and others to grasp and review the situation of U.S. service members living off base.

On the following day, February 20, we visited Nakagusukuson where Hadnott's home is located. The central part of Okinawa has a large off-base population.

Hadnott's home is in a residential area with some 20 single-story houses overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The houses are occupied 50-50 by Japanese and Americans. A 29-year-old woman who knows Hadnott said to us: "He is a friendly person. He greeted us and petted our dog. I still cannot believe the incident."

On Feb. 18, an intoxicated U.S. Marine was arrested on suspicion of trespassing in a private residence in Nago. U.S. Marine headquarters in Japan has imposed a lockdown to completely prohibit U.S. service members from leaving the base, starting on February 20. Service member living off base are also prohibited from leaving their homes other than for performing their duties and the like.

The Japanese government has denied revising the SOFA. Concerned

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about the rape incident's possible negative impact on the relocation of Futenma Air Station, the government is scheduled to come up shortly with preventive measures in collaboration with the U.S. military.

Meanwhile, Governor Nakaima revealed his intention to lobby the U.S. government and Congress for a review of the SOFA, saying, "I would like to visit the United States to transmit Okinawa's situation and get it understood."

A man living near Hadnott's home said coldly: "Every time an incident occurs, the U.S. military pledges to take preventive measures. But a crime occurred right here. They cannot keep an eye on every U.S. service member outside the base."

SOFA remains one-sided

Attention is again focused on a revision of the SOFA, which was concluded in 1960. Lawyer Toshio Ikemiyagi, who is also representative of the Okinawa national network providing relief to victims of crimes by U.S. service members, noted: "(Hadnott) has denied the rape charge. If he had run into the base, the U.S. military might not have handed him over to Japan."

The SOFA includes preferential treatment to the U.S. military. The U.S. military can refuse the pre-indictment handover to Japan of a U.S. service member who committed a crime while on duty. The U.S. has agreed, following the 1995 incident, to give "sympathetic consideration" to the pre-indictment handover if service members are suspected of coming serious crimes. Still, the pact is unfair.

The agreement has no mention of off-base housing, and the Japanese side does not know who lives where. Hosei University Professor Hiroshi Honma, who is well versed in the SOFA, noted: "The incident has exposed a huge loophole in the SOFA."

Reportedly, the U.S. military regards off-base housing areas as its property, and Japan needs U.S. authorization in searching off-base U.S. military housing. U.S. service members living off base are free from paying resident taxes and public services, such as collecting garbage, are covered by municipal governments.

(7) Editorial: Put efforts into SOFA revision

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 5) (Full)
February 21, 2008

Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima is planning to visit the United States to call for a revision of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). Nakaima revealed the plan for the first time in a February regular meeting of the Okinawa prefectural assembly.

The SOFA accords various privileges to U.S. military personnel. Its implementation is also up to the U.S. military's discretion.

Iha addressed the prefectural assembly with his policy speech in its current session. In that speech as well, Iha referred to the necessity of revising the SOFA provisions. He suggested the need for the government to take action. "It's very important to obtain understanding and cooperation from many more lawmakers and people," he stated. He also said, "I will make positive efforts for that through every opportunity in cooperation with the governors of other

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base-hosting prefectures."

The government's response is now being called into question. However, the government does not intend at all to negotiate with the United States to revise the SOFA, and insists that improvements only need to make in the application of the provisions.

This time around, Gov. Nakaima has revealed his plan to visit the United States. He probably deemed it would be a shortcut to make a direct appeal to the U.S. government and the U.S. Congress based on the real situation in Okinawa. However, the United States is not easy to deal with.

That is because the United States fears potential repercussions on its status of forces agreements with Japan, South Korea, and other countries should it decide to revise the SOFA provisions. This is also why the United States has consistently refused to revise the SOFA and has shrugged off local outcries by improving the operation of SOFA provisions.

Okinawa must make its call strong enough so that the SOFA is

revised. To that end, it is essential to obtain public support not only in Okinawa Prefecture but across the nation.

We wonder if the governor has voiced words that are convincing enough to obtain such public support.

In the wake of a recent schoolgirl rape, Nakaima first expressed concern about its possible impact on the realignment of U.S. forces. This may well cause us to think he may be worried about something else in his heart of hearts. It is hard to see what he meant to say.

In the age of television politics, a politician's casual gesture can show that person's innermost thinking.

Nakaima's predecessors worked out respective detailed proposals to revise the SOFA provisions. Nakaima should go over these proposals for SOFA change. And then, we want him to send a clear-cut message about which portion of the SOFA should be revised and how.

(8) Taro Aso absorbed in political activities with eye on next LDP presidential race

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
February 20, 2008

Taro Aso, former secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), who was defeated by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda in the party leadership race last September, has made himself the topic of conversation in various ways. He advocated in a monthly magazine the notion of covering basic pensions by using tax revenues. He became the chair of a group of nonpartisan Diet members who are calling for the promotion of information technology at the local-government level. Aso aims to succeed Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda by forming an alliance with former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and former LDP policy chief Shoichi Nakagawa. What will be his next move in the current tumultuous political atmosphere?

Aso, on the evening of Feb. 9 delivered a speech before a large crowd in front of Yokohama station, standing alongside former Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Yoshihide Suga. He

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jokingly said:

"There is no such thing as a perfect political party or a perfect politician. Is there anyone who thinks your husband is the best? Oh, there is one person over there? Don't you know that you are being deceived?"

Aso has already visited more than 80 places across the nation since last year's LDP presidential election. He still enjoys high popularity.

Aso's political slogan is "Tremendous Japan." His speeches about Japan's potentialities that seek to root out the current pessimism seem to have struck a sympathetic cord among young people and housewives.

Aso has been also busy himself with political activities. He is a member of the group of HANA consisting of former MITI minister Takeo Hiranuma, Abe, Nakagawa and Aso. The group advocates a plan to revitalize conservatism. He has boosted exchanges with such No. 2-level members in the factions as Suga, Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Akira Amari, Justice Minister Kunio Hatoyama, and Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Tadamori Oshima.

In a Lower House plenary session on Jan. 18, Aso told Nakagawa, who sits next to him in the chamber: "Let's form a group called NASA, which would be made up of the initials of Nakagawa, Aso, Suga, and Amari!"

Nakagawa said: "Are you planning space travel?"

However, the LDP's faction heads are becoming increasingly nervous about Aso's moves. They are concerned that they may be replaced if

Aso becomes prime minister.

Under such circumstances, Aso met with former Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa on Jan. 30 and Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura on Feb. 1. He has decided to visit South Korea on Feb. 24-25 along with former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and Hidenao Nakagawa to attend the presidential inauguration for Lee Myung Bak.

Aso has decided to avoid needless confrontation with the Machimura faction, from which he has distanced himself. Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura, who heads the faction, appears to have judged

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that cooperation with Aso is indispensable for the stability of the Fukuda government.

Aso also eyes cooperation with the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto). Teaming with DPJ Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama, he formed the parliamentarians' league to promote IT in local governments. This move indicated a political realignment of conservative forces, intertwined with Hiranuma's notion of forming a new party. Aso wrote an article, "Aso plan to restore security," for the March issue of the monthly Chuo Koron. In it, he proposes a plan to cover the basic pension system by using tax revenues.

However the Aso faction has only 18 members. Therefore, he will be forced into a tough situation if the Machimura, Koa and Yamasaki factions move to tighten the noose around him.

Former Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma, who is an old friend and advisor of Aso, commented: "Aso is the only person in the party who

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has flair, which is an indispensable requirement for LDP president. The one thing that he needs, though, is flexibility."

SCHIEFFER